

BOOK CLUB in a bag

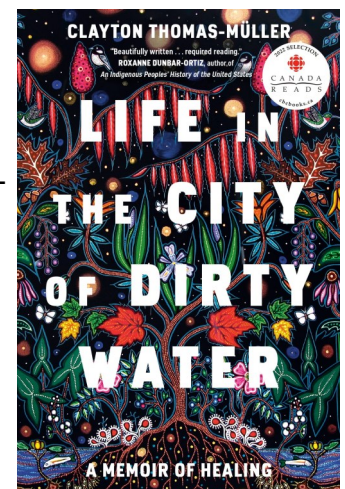


Life in the City of Dirty Water

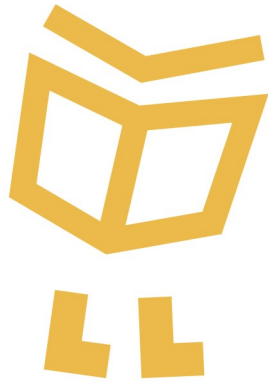
Clayton Thomas-Müller

Discussion Questions

1. What did you think of this memoir? Did you find the author's story compelling? What do you think prompted him to share his story?
2. "But without that connection to the land, much of my experiences with our shared Native culture felt hollow or ornamental. My culture was slipping through my fingers...going once in a while to a Native event in the city, with all of that on my shoulders and deep inside my psyche is no substitute for a relationship with the land" (35-36). Consider this quote and the disconnect the author describes of being Indigenous in the city.
3. How does the violence and abuse faced by the author influence his path as he becomes an adolescent?
4. "There's an undercurrent, a feeling you get as a Brown kid growing up when you know someone has a racial bias towards you. You can feel it in your gut" (128). The author begins experiencing racism as a young child, when parents wouldn't allow their children to play with him. Discuss the author's experience with racism in school and in the justice and prison system.
5. Following his release from prison, the author begins managing a drug house run by the Manitoba Warriors, a criminal organization run by his uncle. What did you think of his experience in the gang and his decision to leave?
6. Consider the following quote: "I learned that juice isn't something you can count on. If you don't do anything to change the world, it is going to keep running along the same old tracks. If you want a different outcome, you need justice to roll along different tracks" (123).
7. Discuss the author's involvement in programs such as Anishinaabe Oway-Ishi and Medicine Fire Lodge and how this led to the start of his activism work with Aboriginal Youth with Initiative.
8. The author discusses the effects of the residential school system and how Indigenous culture was suppressed as a result: "Instead of simply inhabiting your traditions, you would be relearning them. Rediscovering them. Even when you had them back, though, they would not be the same. It would be a sweet relief to have them back. You might cherish them all the more. But you would be forever haunted by the years you had wandered through life without the meaning they offer" (232). Discuss.
9. What did you learn from this book? What do you want to know more about?



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About the Author

Clayton Thomas-Müller is a member of the Treaty #6 based Mathias Colomb Cree Nation also known as Pukatawagan located in Northern Manitoba, Canada. He is a campaigner for 350.org, a global movement that's responding to the climate crisis. He has campaigned on behalf of Indigenous peoples around the world for more than 20 years, working with the Indigenous Environmental Network, Black Mesa Water Coalition, Global Justice Ecology Project, and Bioneers, among others. Clayton has led Indigenous delegations to lobby United Nations bodies, including the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Earth Summit (Johannesburg, 2002 and Rio+20, 2012) and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. He has coordinated and led delegations of Indigenous peoples to lobby government in Washington, DC, Ottawa, and the European Union (Strasbourg and Brussels).

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